

Mr Keith Zimmerman - Director, Students
 The Open University
 Walton Hall
 Milton Keynes
 Buckinghamshire
 Great Britain MK7 6AA

18 November 2014

Dear Mr Zimmerman,

I am a former student (personal identifier: M1501700) of the Open University, where I have been awarded the Bachelor of Arts in 1991 and the Honours, Upper Second Class, in 1995. Below is a table of the years in which I was enrolled at the Open University and the individual courses that I have studied in those years. The courses that I have passed with distinction are italicised.

YEAR	COURSE
1984	Social Sciences - A Foundation Course
1985	An Arts Foundation Course
1986	<i>Third World Studies</i>
1990	Beliefs and Ideologies
1991	<i>Science, Technology and Everyday Life 1870 - 1950</i>
1992	Perspectives on Revolution
1995	Philosophy of the Arts

Presently I am an applicant for admission to the doctoral degree programme of the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg in its Graduate School of the Humanities. In that context, the admissions officer here has asked me to provide evidence of my *Hochschulzugangsberechtigung* (= ‘generic “right to university admission”’) by way of the document that was the basis for my first admission to undergraduate level

studies elsewhere. As it was the Open University where I became an undergraduate student for the first time, I could thus oblige the admissions officer here by way of a statement from the Open University (1) that I began my undergraduate level studies at the Open University in 1984, (2) that the attainment of a minimum age was then the decisive criterion for admission to the undergraduate level foundation course in which I was first registered, (3) that I had attained the minimum age for admission in 1984, (4) that the evidence of my having satisfied the minimum age requirement was my passport, (5) that the first two courses which I completed at the Open University, respectively in 1984 and 1985, were undergraduate level foundation courses, and (6) that successful completion of at least one undergraduate level foundation course of the Open University is commonly accepted as a qualification for entry to undergraduate level courses at other UK universities.

I had hoped to find some evidence for the important detail, which I find difficult to explain here, that - in the UK - completion of the Open University's undergraduate level foundation courses is itself considered an equivalent of the more common university admission requirement of three A-levels. *Inter alia*, I have looked for such evidence in the tariff tables of UCAS, only to discover to my surprise that among the many alternatives to 'three A-levels', there is no mention of the Open University's undergraduate level foundation courses in that document. (I have written about that omission to the chief executive of UCAS and am sharing the correspondence with her and with you by way of attached photocopies.) However, even if such information were to be found on the webpages of UCAS or elsewhere, it would still have to be complemented with the important additional detail, that entry to an undergraduate level foundation course of the Open University is possible on the basis of attainment of the stipulated minimum age alone.

The deadline for meeting the formal requirements for university admission to the winter term here has already passed last month. But I have been given an extension until the end of the current calendar month. As also the success of my provisional funding arrangements for the 2014 / 2015 academic year is dependent on my being registered here for the winter term, I hope that you could be so good to assist me in my current effort to secure my timely admission here with a statement that gives both the essential general information about the Open University's admissions policy as well as the necessary additional detail about my own first registration as an undergraduate student there. To provide some further background to this request I provide a fuller statement in the appendix to this letter.

I eagerly anticipate your valued response to my request. In the meantime I remain with many thanks for your friendly attention and effort.

Yours sincerely

Appendix to a letter of 18 November 2014 by Ingo Porada to Mr Keith Zimmerman

I am a former student of the Open University, where I have been awarded the Bachelor of Arts in 1991 and the Honours, Upper Second Class, in 1995. Below is a table of the years in which I was enrolled at the Open University and the individual courses that I have studied in those years. The courses that I have passed with distinction are italicised.

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I already had an auspicious educational and professional record even before I first became an undergraduate student at the Open University in 1984. However, I had in 1974 left the secondary school that I have last attended in South Africa without obtaining its final leaving certificate. I took this step in a context of apprehensions about my prospective conscription to South Africa's military service before a background of concurrent upheavals in my family situation. Ten years later, the Open University was my first chance to recover from this educational setback.

I have alternated my studies at the Open University, where I became an undergraduate student for the first time, with studies at the University of Warwick and the University of Southampton. After having completed two undergraduate level foundation courses at the Open University, I went on to obtain, in 1989, the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours, Class Two, Division One, in Politics with International Studies at the University of Warwick. I then resumed my studies for the degree of Bachelor of Arts of the Open University, which I obtained in 1991. On the basis of my two bachelor's degrees of the University of Warwick and the Open University, I was then admitted as a postgraduate student at the University of Southampton, from where I was later - in 1995 - awarded the degree of Master of Science, in Politics and Culture, with Distinction. In the same year, a short while after that latter award, I still also attained the Honours, Upper Second Class, of the Open University. Subsequently I returned to the University of Warwick as a doctoral student, for which I brought with me, as credentials, not only my two good bachelor's degrees of that university and of the Open University, and my master's degree with distinction of the University of Southampton, but also the personal invitation of the erstwhile external examiner of my highly lauded master's thesis **The Aeneid, Lessing and 'the End of Art'**, who was then based there. Not long thereafter, that professor obtained an appointment at the University of Sheffield, to where I then followed him.

Because of a succession of funding difficulties in my doctoral studies, in combination with compelling calls on my professional expertise at other universities (Aoyama Gagin University, Komazawa University, Meiji University, Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys, Tama Art University, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Universiteit van Stellenbosch, University of Namibia, University of South Africa) and at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (Alexandria, Egypt) and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (Delhi, India), and ever increasing family commitments, I have suspended those studies several years ago. Having meanwhile followed my wife and my daughter to Germany, where they are pursuing their own educational goals, I now wish to register as a doctoral student at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg.

In order to be admitted at a German university, I have to document my *Hochschulzugangsberechtigung* (= 'generic "right to university admission"'). The *Hochschulzugangsberechtigung* is most commonly established by the completion of the highest level of secondary education, and is referred to, as such, as the *Abitur*. This concept of *Hochschulzugangsberechtigung* is somewhat different from the convention in the UK where the most common university entry qualification - 'three A-levels' - is, in principle, only the individual applicant's negotiating capital *vis-à-vis* her or his preferred university and hence does not, *per se*, constitute a 'generic "right to university admission"'.

However, regardless of this fine point, comparability of the two systems is still given in so far as they make the attainment of the highest level of secondary education a yardstick for decisions about university admission. Thus, the *Abitur* is commonly accepted at UK universities *in lieu* of three A-levels for admission of German secondary school leavers, and - *mutatis mutandis* - three A-levels are commonly accepted at German universities *in lieu* of the *Abitur* for admission of UK secondary school leavers. Besides, in the UK, as in Germany, there are many alternative routes to university, of which one - in the UK - are the undergraduate level foundation courses of the Open University.

On that basis I have presented here my bachelor's certificate of the Open University (along with my Honours Certificate of the Open University, my bachelor's certificate of the University of Warwick, and my master's certificate of the University of Southampton) as evidence of my 'generic "right to university admission"'. My bachelor's certificate of the Open University is evidence of my 'generic "right to university admission"' as foundation courses of the Open University are indeed accepted as an entry qualification by other UK universities. Besides, my 'generic "right to university admission"' is evidenced still more 'generically' by my other university degrees in terms of the longstanding international convention (which meanwhile is further reinforced - in Europe - by the in this case particularly applicable aspirations of the Bologna Process) that the highest previously attained academic qualification provides 'standing' at that level and is a passport to registration for a degree at the next higher level than the highest degree that is already held.

Unlike on earlier occasions, however, when I was an applicant for admission at other universities in the UK, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Japan, I have here also been asked to document, in addition, the qualification by which I gained entry into the university where I began my studies at degree level, namely the Open University. However, as this request of the admissions officer here is informed by the model of secondary education and tertiary education as categories that are not only conceptually distinct but also occur as successive processes, I have therefore not been able to explain here that the Open University's undergraduate level foundation courses straddle and hence transcend these boundaries of concept and process, because access to them is conditional only upon a minimum age having been attained and not upon successful completion of the highest level of secondary education.

My own records might tangentially provide corroboration of these facts. However, if the presupposition is that my documentation would confirm the conventional model of educational progression wherein successful completion of the 'highest level of secondary education' precedes and is distinct from my studies at the Open University, the decisive detail might still be overlooked or disregarded. I had therefore hoped to find some evidence for the important detail that - in the UK - completion of the Open University's undergraduate level foundation courses is itself considered an equivalent of the more common university admission requirement of three A-levels *inter alia* in the tariff tables of UCAS. But I was surprised to discover that among the many alternatives to 'three A-levels' that are listed in those tables, there is no mention of the Open University's undergraduate level foundation courses. Even if such information were to be found on the webpages of UCAS or elsewhere, however, it would still have to be complemented with the important additional information, that entry to an undergraduate level foundation course of the Open University is possible on the basis of attainment of the stipulated minimum age alone.

In the circumstances, I could thus oblige the admissions officer here by way of a statement from the Open University (1) that I began my undergraduate level studies at the Open University in 1984, (2) that the attainment of a minimum age was then the decisive criterion for admission to the undergraduate level foundation course in which I was first registered, (3) that I had attained the minimum age for admission in 1984, (4) that the evidence of my having satisfied the minimum age requirement was my passport, (5) that the first two courses which I completed at the Open University, respectively in 1984 and 1985, were undergraduate level foundation courses, and (6) that successful completion of at least one undergraduate level foundation course of the Open University is commonly accepted as a qualification for entry to undergraduate level courses at other UK universities. The deadline for meeting the formal requirements for university admission to the winter term here has already passed last month. But the admissions officer here has given me an extension till the end of the current calendar month. As also the success of my provisional funding arrangements for the 2014 / 2015 academic year is dependent on my being registered here for the winter term it is an imperative of high urgency for me to obtain, within a few days, suitable documentation that evidences the above points (1), (2), (3), (4), (5) and (6).

Mrs Mary Curnock Cook

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Rosehill

New Barn Lane

Cheltenham

Gloucestershire

Great Britain GL52 3LZ

18 November 2014

Dear Mrs Curnock Cook,

I am presently an applicant for admission to the doctoral degree programme of the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg in its Graduate School of the Humanities, after having accumulated an excellent portfolio of prior academic achievement and professional accomplishments over a timespan of nearly four decades and across three continents. In the context of this university's enrolment formalities, I have presented here my bachelor's certificate of the Open University - along with my Honours Certificate of the Open University, my bachelor's certificate of the University of Warwick, and my master's certificate of the University of Southampton - as evidence of the academic standing by which I support my claim to university admission. Unlike on earlier occasions, however, when I was an applicant for admission at other universities in the UK, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Japan, I have here also been asked to document, in addition, the qualification by which I gained entry into the university where I began my studies at undergraduate level in 1984, namely the Open University.

While the UK and Germany customarily recognise one another's university entry qualifications, the undergraduate level foundation courses of the Open University

do not fit the model, that is very firmly established here, of secondary education and tertiary education as categories that are not only conceptually distinct but also occur as successive processes. As access to the undergraduate level foundation courses of the Open University is conditional only upon a minimum age having been attained and not upon successful completion of the highest level of secondary education, they straddle and hence transcend these boundaries of concept and process. Consequently, completion of undergraduate level foundation courses of the Open University is itself evidence of educational preparation for university admission having been acquired *via* a recognised route.

Statements of this fact, which I now find so difficult to explain here, do of course appear in various sources, but they are there mostly of a secondary nature and also not sufficiently specific for my purpose. The webpage **Examples of Vocational and Other Qualifications** of the University of Oxford, for instance, is only somewhat derived evidence and, moreover, does not cover UK universities overall. I have therefore also turned to for the **Tariff Tables** of UCAS in the hope of discovering a somewhat more obviously ‘universally valid’, official, first hand document which manifests that undergraduate level foundation courses of the Open University are a generally accepted qualification for entry to other universities. Alas, to my surprise the undergraduate level foundation courses of the Open University are not mentioned in the **Tariff Tables** of UCAS at all.

I have written about my present need for a document which shows that I have in 1984 legitimately entered undergraduate level tertiary education for the first time at the Open University to its *Director, Students*. As I have mentioned in that letter also my effort to find a relevant document in the **Tariff Tables** of UCAS, I am sharing the correspondence with the Open University’s *Director, Students* and with you by way of the attached photocopies. Although I am confident that I would obtain a satisfactory response to my request from the Open University, a supporting statement from your side would certainly also be very helpful to me, both in the context of my present registration procedure at the Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, which I must complete by the end of next week, as also for possibly similar contexts in the future.

I look forward to receiving your valued response. In the meantime I remain with cordial thanks for your respected attention and effort.

Yours sincerely